I have tried five or six different ways of treating Portia, but the way I think best is not the one which finds the heartiest response from my audiences. Has there ever been a dramatist, I wonder, whose parts admit of as many different interpretations as do Shakespeare's ? There lies his immortality as an acting force. For times change, and parts have to be acted differently for different generations. Some parts are not sufficiently universal for this to be possible, but every ten years an actor can reconsider a Shakespeare part and find new life in it for his new purpose and new audiences.

The aesthetic craze, with all its faults, was responsible for a great deal of true enthusiasm for anything beautiful It made people welcome the Bancrofts' production of " The Merchant of Venice " with an appreciation which took the practical form of an offer to keep the performances going by subscription, as the general public was not supporting them. Sir Frederick and Lady Pollock, James Spedding, Edwin Arnold, Sir Frederick Leighton and others made the proposal to the Bancrofts, but nothing came of it.

Short as the run of the play was, it was a wonderful time for me. Every one seemed to be in love with me ! I had sweethearts by the dozen, known and unknown. Most of the letters written to me I destroyed long ago, but the feeling of sweetness and light with which some of them filled me can never be destroyed. The task of reading and answering letters has been a heavy one all

my life, but it would be ungrateful to complain of it. To some people expression is life itself. Half my letters begin : " I cannot help writing to tell you," and I believe that this is the simple truth. If, for one, should have been poorer, though my eyes might have been stronger, if they *had* been able to help it!